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April 26, 2005

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

COUNTY TELECOMMUTING PROGRAM

On February 24, 2005, my office submitted a preliminary report in response to the Board's action of November 16, 2004 instructing my office to review and reassess the current Board Policy for the Los Angeles County Telecommuting Program and return to the Board with an updated Policy for the Telecommuting Program, including specific requirements for the Program. This final report responds to the issues addressed in the Board motion, and includes: 1) a summary of the survey results; 2) general recommendations for improving the County Telecommuting Program; and 3) recommended revisions to the Telecommuting Board Policy, Telecommuter's Agreement/Telecommuting Standards, and Telecommuting Fact Sheet.

Survey of Existing County Telecommuting Program

Pursuant to the Board motion, my office developed and transmitted a survey to the department heads which queried them on telecommuting program participation, policy, training, evaluation, and recommendations for improvement. Ninety-five percent of the departments responded to the questionnaire. Over all, the survey responses indicate that the County Telecommuting Program (CTP) is effective but could be improved by: 1) establishing oversight within the Chief Administrative Office; 2) strengthening the data collection requirements for participating departments; 3) adding additional requirements for telecommuters and supervisors and managers of telecommuters; and 4) tightening program participation requirements. These issues are addressed in the recommendations, which follow the summary of the survey results below.

Program Participation

Twenty departments presently participate in the CTP and there are approximately 1,410 employees who telecommute Countywide. Ninety-one percent (1,289) are located in five departments: Public Social Services (DPSS), Health Services (DHS), Mental Health (DMH), Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the Community Development Commission (CDC). DPSS has the largest number of telecommuters (688), followed by DHS (260), CDC (167), DMH (93), and DCFS (81). The remaining 121 telecommuters are distributed unevenly across departments, ranging from a low of two telecommuters in one department to 26 in another.

The Countywide average number of days per week spent telecommuting is approximately 1.6 days, with a low of 0.2 days and a high of 4.56 days for individual departments. However, this figure excludes data from two of the largest participating departments because this information was unavailable. One department indicated that they were unable to capture this type of information because there is no separate timecard code for telecommuting. None of the departments indicated that telecommuting was tracked under "out of office" or any other such "time allocation" description. However, there is no existing Countywide standard regarding timecard coding for telecommuting. As a consequence, there is a need for a separate timecard code for telecommuting to better track the average number of days spent telecommuting by County employees, as this information is essential to program evaluation.

The activities performed by telecommuters vary by department and are related to the mission of each department. For example, the vast majority of telecommuters within DPSS are social workers who perform case management functions while telecommuting, and the majority of telecommuters within Probation are Adult Investigators with case management responsibilities. Other activities performed by telecommuters include: data analysis, contract administration, audit reports, data entry, project oriented work, reading and writing, word processing, and conducting work by telephone.

The types of job classifications currently telecommuting include a wide range from staff support positions to professional, technical and managerial positions. While some participating departments have very specific criteria with respect to what job classes are selected for telecommuting, others do not. The Board requested my office to review the current job classes using telecommuting with specific guidelines for enhancement or cutbacks if necessary. We believe departments should maintain the flexibility to decide which job classifications are most suitable for telecommuting because they are best able to determine their individual needs.

Telecommuting Training

Currently, telecommuters and their managers are required to attend a one-time telecommuter training before telecommuting begins. The departments call the Office of Workplace Programs within the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) to schedule

training, and the Office of Workplace Programs pays for the consultant to conduct training and prepares packets. The training includes a video presentation and information covering telecommuting policies, standards, procedures, and expectations of both telecommuters and their managers. The training also provides helpful hints to developing good habits, managing work, and setting up a safe home office. There is a question and answer period and instructions are provided regarding filling out the telecommuter's agreement form. Departmental contacts keep records of sign-ups and actual attendees.

The existing CTP does not have an annual training requirement for telecommuters. Only 15 percent of the participating departments provide training for telecommuters, and supervisors and managers of telecommuters beyond what is included in the initial County training. Only one participating department has an annual training requirement for telecommuters, and supervisors and managers of telecommuters.

The November 16, 2004 Board motion contained a recommendation approving "the creation of annual orientation/training certification sessions for employees, supervisors and managers enrolled in departmental telecommuting programs and appropriated \$100,000 for studies and research on telecommuting in the marketplace, best practices, trends, etc...", but did not specify a source of funding, or specifically include the telecommuting training within the list of tasks eligible for funding. Specific funds will need to be identified, and my office will be looking into the possibility of using future AB 2766 subvention funds and other resources to enhance the Countywide Telecommuter Training and to develop and provide the annual department-specific trainings.

Monitoring and Evaluating Telecommuters

Monitoring was primarily done on an employee-by-employee basis to measure each individual's daily performance. While telecommuters are required to be available during the workday by e-mail or by telephone, and to meet with managers on their return to discuss their prior day work progress, participating departments make no distinction between telecommuters and non-telecommuters with respect to compiling productivity data. Therefore, separate statistics are not available to measure the performance of telecommuters, and none of the participating departments perform any additional oversight of employees who telecommute. Although none of the participating departments cited specific examples, many indicated that the employee's telecommuting participation would be terminated if performance was unsatisfactory. Even though there are no separate statistics available to measure the performance of telecommuters versus non-telecommuters, we believe that telecommuting is of most benefit to the County if it is reserved for the most suitable employees as demonstrated by at least "competent" performance evaluations.

Telecommuting Policy and Standards

The existing Telecommuting Policy and Telecommuting Standards, established in 1989 and 1990, respectively provide the general framework for the CTP. The existing Telecommuting Policy defines the purpose of telecommuting, explains that it is a management option, defines the terms and conditions of employment, requires telecommuters to sign a Telecommuting Agreement, and requires telecommuters to comply with the County's Telecommuting Standards, which address policy issues related to worker's compensation, use of County equipment, telephone costs, tax implications, and other issues. Sites that are regulated (over 250 employees at worksite) by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) are required to keep records on their telecommuting program for three years for AQMD audit purposes if they have telecommuting listed as a strategy. Unregulated sites (those with less than 250 employees), or regulated sites that do not list telecommuting as a rideshare strategy, are not currently required to maintain telecommuting records. Therefore, because of the relative lack of program participant documentation identified by the survey results, additional data collection would contribute to program effectiveness and help us better substantiate our contribution to trip reductions.

The proposed Board Policy for the Telecommuting Program, contained in Attachment A, continues to provide the general framework for the CTP, and includes a requirement for participating departments to maintain detailed records on the program for three years and makes the Employee Transportation Coordinator within each department responsible for record keeping, restricts participation to employees with a "competent" or higher performance evaluation in their most recent evaluation, requires telecommuting hours to be recorded on employee timecards using a specific code designation, and requires telecommuters and their managers to attend annual department-specific orientation/training certification sessions.

The proposed Telecommuting Agreement/Telecommuting Standards, contained in Attachment B, continues to provide County departments with specific guidelines for participation in the CTP, and adds a requirement for telecommuters and their managers to attend the initial Countywide Telecommuting orientation and training and department specific-training before telecommuting begins, and requires all records, including training, to be maintained for a minimum of three years by the certified Employee Transportation Coordinator within each department, who is responsible for all record keeping associated with the CTP.

Telecommuting Fact Sheet and Program Manual

The existing Telecommuting Fact Sheet includes a list of specific questions and answers about the CTP and provides general guidance to participating departments. It has been updated (Attachment C) to reflect the proposed changes to the

Telecommuting Policy and Telecommuting Standards described above. Taken together, the updated Telecommuting Board Policy, Telecommuter's Agreement/Telecommuting Standards, and Telecommuting Fact Sheet constitute the updated overall County Telecommuting Program Manual.

Other Program Enhancements

In order to enhance program coordination throughout the County, my office could coordinate the development of semi-annual oversight reports by departments and prepare an annual comprehensive report. In addition, my office could identify future funding sources such as AB 2766 subvention funds for enhanced training and other program-related purposes. Also, to ensure telecommuting reporting by departments, the Auditor-Controller could create a timecard code designation for telecommuting.

Recommendations

We believe adoption of the following recommendations will ensure the effectiveness of the County's Telecommuting Program.

1. Approve the updated Board Policy for the County Telecommuting Program (Attachment A), which adds record maintenance and retention requirements for participating departments, restricts program participation to "competent" performers, requires telecommuting hours to be recorded on timecards using a specific code designation, and requires annual department-specific orientation/training certification sessions for employees, supervisors and managers who telecommute;
2. Approve the updated Telecommuting Agreement/Standards (Attachment B), which adds a requirement for telecommuters and their managers to attend Countywide Telecommuting orientation and training and department specific-training before telecommuting begins, and annual certification sessions for employees, supervisors, and managers enrolled in telecommuting programs, and requires departments to keep and maintain records associated with the County Telecommuting Program for three years;
3. Require County Departments to submit semi-annual reports on telecommuting to the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) and require the CAO to submit an annual comprehensive telecommuting report to the Board to enhance oversight of the program;
4. Request that the Auditor-Controller create a timecard code designation for telecommuting; and

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5. Instruct the Chief Administrative Office to identify a source for the \$100,000 approved in the November 16, 2004 Board motion, including the possibility of using future AB 2766 subvention funds, and use a portion of the funds for the development and maintenance of the Countywide Telecommuter Training and the annual department-specific training.

If you need additional information, please contact Eddie Washington at (213) 893-2479, Victoria Pipkin-Lane at (213) 974-2495, or Craig Hirakawa at (213) 974-1347.

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Attachments

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
 Each Department Head

Los Angeles County
Board of Supervisors Policy Manual

Policy #9.090 Recommended Revised Telecommuting Board Policy

PURPOSE

Promotes achievement of the County's regional clean air and traffic mitigation goals as mandated by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) Rule 2202.

Enhances the County's employee commute reduction program by offering/supporting an off-site work environment that eliminates the trip to work or reduces travel distance to the worksite by more than 50 percent.

Utilizes orientation and training sessions to provide alternative ways of working to maximize County resources, reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and improve employee morale.

REFERENCE

January 31, 1989 Board Order, Synopsis 5

August 16, 1990 County of Los Angeles Telecommuting Standards

November 16, 2004 Burke motion to update Board Policy by Feb. 22, 2004 (extension sought to April 25, 2005)

_____ (Date to bring updated Telecommuting Policy to Board for approval.)

POLICY

The County Board of Supervisors has approved the establishment of a County Telecommuting Program (CTP). Telecommuting is working at a location other than a conventional office. This can be either at home, neighborhood center or at an office close to home.

Telecommuting is a management option, not a universal employee benefit. Department heads are encouraged to implement telecommuting as a means of increasing its average vehicle ridership (AVR) for regulated sites, and when it is deemed mutually beneficial by both the department and the employee. Selection criteria should be based on suitability of their jobs, an assessment of the likelihood of their success as telecommuters, and an assessment of their supervisor's ability to manage remote workers.

It is required that County departments maintain detailed records of the number of employees participating in the program, number of days per week each employee telecommutes, records of signed agreements and orientation and training sessions offered in support of the program for a minimum of three years.

Telecommuters may be selected from either represented or non-represented employees, and must have a performance evaluation of "Competent" or higher for the most recent Performance Evaluation.

A telecommuting agreement should be entered into by both the County and the employee. The agreement should require adherence to the telecommuting standards, guidelines and conditions first adopted by the Board of Supervisors on August 16, 1990 and updated in 2005. The telecommuting standards address policy issues related to workers compensation, use of County equipment, telephone costs, tax implications and other issues deemed appropriate by the County.

Finally, the terms and conditions of employment for the telecommuter must conform to County Code, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) provisions and/or any other terms agreed to by both employee and supervisor. Work hours, overtime, compensation and vacation schedules are included and remain subject to the County Code and MOU agreements. Telecommuting hours are to be recorded on employee timecards using a specific code designation.

Responsible Department

Chief Administrative Office

Date Issued/Sunset Date

Issue Date: _____, 2005

Sunset Date: _____, 2015

**Los Angeles County
Telecommuting Program
Telecommuter's Agreement/Telecommuting Standards**

Telecommuting is working at a location other than a conventional office. This can be either at a home or another location which is less than fifty percent of the normal commute from home to work. Telecommuting is an option that management may choose to make available to qualified employees when a mutually beneficial situation exists. It is not a universal employee benefit.

Telecommuting is an alternate work method which may meet the needs of the County's regional clean air and traffic mitigation goals as mandated by the South Coast Air Quality Management District Rule 2202. However, employees do not have a "right" to telecommute and this work option may be terminated by either the employee or the County at any time.

The following conditions for telecommuting must be agreed to by the telecommuter and the department (employee's supervisor):

1. The employee agrees to work at the following location:

(Home or alternate work address)
2. The employee will telecommute _____ day(s) a week, or _____ days a month.
3. The employee's work hours will be as follows:
Day: _____ From: _____ To: _____
4. The employee agrees to complete assignments to be worked on at home or an alternate location by the agreed upon delivery dates. The telemanager (supervisor) will provide the employee with all work assignments.
5. Equipment to be used by the employee at the telecommuting worksite will be agreed to by both the telemanager and the employee. The following equipment is needed to complete work assignments: _____

6. The telemanager and employee agree to the following arrangement regarding business telephone calls, use of cell phone, use of pager and use of a fax machine. _____

7. The employee agrees to call the central office to retrieve work related messages at least ____ times per telework day.
8. The employee agrees to "check out" all supplies needed for the work assignments by contacting the appropriate office staff. Out of pocket expenses for supplies regularly available at the County office will not normally be reimbursed, unless approved by the telemanager.
9. Additional conditions agreed upon by the County (telemanager or supervisor) and the employee are as follows: _____

TELECOMMUTING STANDARDS

When a telecommuting assignment is agreed upon, the following standards apply:

1. Telecommuting is entirely voluntary and may be terminated by the employee or the County at any time.
2. The duties, obligations, responsibilities and conditions of a telecommuter's employment with the County are unchanged. Employee's salary, retirement, benefits and County-sponsored insurance coverage are unchanged.
3. Telecommuters and their managers are required to attend a CTP orientation and training, and a department-specific training before telecommuting begins. Annually, telecommuters will attend a departmental refresher training course to ensure compliance with CTP requirements and standards.
4. All records, including training, must be kept for a minimum of three years. The certified Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) within each department will be responsible for all record keeping associated with telecommuting.
5. Work hours, overtime compensation and vacation schedule will conform to the County Code, to MOU provisions and to terms otherwise agreed upon by employee and the supervisor.
6. The use of equipment, software, data supplies and furniture, when provided by the County for use at the offsite work location, is limited to authorized persons and for purposes relating to County business.
7. Employees should designate a work space for installation of equipment to be used in the project. This work space should be maintained in a safe condition, free from hazards and other dangers to employee and equipment.

8. Since the offsite work location shall be considered an extension of the County work space, the County's workers compensation liability for job related accidents will continue to exist during the employee's telecommuting hours.
9. In the event of delay in repair or replacement of equipment or any other circumstances under which it would be impossible for the employee to telecommute, the employee's department may assign other work and/or request that they employee move to another location.
10. When County equipment is provided to the employee, the employee is responsible for seeing that the equipment is properly used. The County will provide for repairs to County equipment.
11. When the employee uses his/her own equipment, the employee is responsible for maintenance and repair of equipment.
12. The employee remains liable for injuries to third persons and/or members of employee's family on employee's premises.
13. Requests to work overtime, use sick leave, vacation or other leave must first be approved by the employee's supervisor in the same manner as when working in the regular office.
14. If a telecommuter is sick while working at home, the telecommuter is required to report the hours worked, and must use sick leave or other accrued time to cover the hours not worked.
15. Employees who telecommute are required to participate in all studies, inquiries, reports or analysis relating to CTP. The data collected may be made available to the general public without identification of employees.
16. Employees remain obligated to comply with all County rules, policies, practices and instructions. Violations of these rules, policies, etc. may result in preclusion from telecommuting and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
17. Individual tax implications related to the home work space shall be the responsibility of the telecommuter. Employees are advised to consult a tax expert.
18. With reasonable notice, the County may make onsite visits to the employee's offsite work location to determine if the place is safe, to ensure there are no hazards, and to maintain, inspect, repair or retrieve County-owned equipment, software, data or supplies.

As a telecommuting employee, I have reviewed the conditions of this telecommuter agreement and the telecommuting standards with my telemanager (supervisor) and agree to the conditions.

Employee

County Office Address

County Telephone Number

Department

Date

Telework (Home) Address

Telework (Home) Telephone Number

Telemanager/Supervisor

Department

Date

TeleComAgree2005

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
TELECOMMUTING PROGRAM
(CTP)**

FACT SHEET

Telecommuting is defined as working at home or at an alternate work location that is less than 50 percent of the regular work commute. Telecommuting is based on the concept that moving the work to the employee increases productivity, reduces absenteeism and improves employee morale. This work option reshapes traditional practices and encourages managers to re-evaluate methods of maximizing County resources.

Sponsored by Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, the County's Telecommuting Program (CTP) was established in September 1989. Currently, approximately 51 percent of Departments participate in the program and have telecommuters that range from department heads to entry level staff.

1. How does telecommuting work?

Telecommuting is a management option, not a universal employee benefit. Telecommuting is strictly voluntary and is available to both represented and non-represented employees. Departments are encouraged to implement telecommuting as a means of increasing its average vehicle ridership (AVR) for regulated sites, and when it is deemed mutually beneficial by both the department and the employee. Participation can be terminated at any time. Departments will submit a semi-annual report to the Chief Administrative Office (CAO), which contains the number of employees participating in the program, number of days per week each employee telecommutes, orientation and training information, records of signed agreements and amendments to those agreements, if any.

2. Why has the County implemented a Telecommuting Program?

In response to a Board of Supervisor's motion in 1989, and in an effort to address air quality and traffic mitigation issues, the Chief Administrative Office coordinated implementation of a Countywide Rideshare program. A key component of this program is telecommuting, which keeps the County in compliance with Rule 2202, Employee Commute Reduction Program (ECRP), which is mandated by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD).

3. How does Telecommuting affect productivity?

Telecommuting when implemented properly has a positive impact on employee productivity. Employee morale improves and work output increases because

there are fewer interruptions and distractions, and employees are able to work at peak times instead of dealing with the stress associated with commuting to and from work.

4. How are telecommuters selected?

Departments identify employees and tasks which are appropriate for telecommuting. Only employees that have performance evaluations of "Competent" or higher for the most recent Performance Evaluation will be eligible to participate.

5. What are the advantages of telecommuting for employees?

Employees receive a personal savings achieved from reduced travel expenses, there is less time spent commuting and, subsequently, less stress. The flexible work environment boosts morale and enhances quality of life.

6. Can telecommuting result in reduced sick leave?

Yes! One of the primary management benefits of telecommuting is a reduction in absenteeism, which can lead to an increase in productivity. An employee in a traditional work setting usually takes four hours off per month for medical or dental appointments. A telecommuter may go to a nearby medical office and later shift their work schedule into the evening to complete regular work hours. Also, an employee who doesn't feel well enough to drive to work can sometimes work at home and still be productive.

7. Is telecommuting an answer to child care or elder care problems?

No. Though telecommuting provides employees with greater flexibility in meeting their child care or elder care needs, it should not be viewed as a substitute. Employees should not be selected to telecommute based solely on this need. Telecommuters must arrange for independent care of young children or elderly persons during work hours.

8. How is the program monitored?

Each department designates a certified Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC), who will collect data on CTP participants. The ETC also will retain the records for a minimum of three years.

The Auditor-Controller will institute a timecard code designation for telecommuting that employees will use to track hours. Each department will submit a semi-annual report on the CTP to the Chief Administrative Office.

The County's fraud hotline will be used to report potential fraud and abuse within the CTP.

9. How will a supervisor know that a telecommuting employee is being productive?

Supervisors are trained in managing by objectives, rather than by observation. Managers must be forward thinking and focus on the quality, quantity and timeliness of the employee's work output and product. Failure to meet targeted goals is cause to terminate an employee's telecommuting agreement. Supervisor, departmental ETC, and telecommuter also should meet regularly as a monitoring mechanism.

10. What does the County do to prepare employees to be successful telecommuters?

Potential telecommuters and their managers will attend a mandatory CTP orientation and training, and a department-specific training prior to telecommuting. Training will be conducted by an experienced consultant contracted by the County. In addition, each departmental ETC will conduct telecommuting update meetings for participants at least semi-annually, and refresher training courses every year to ensure compliance with CTP requirements and standards.

11. What equipment does an employee need to telecommute?

Equipment needs for telecommuters vary from just a telephone, paper and pencil to a computer, modem, printer and fax machine.

Each department determines what equipment, if any, will be loaned or purchased for the telecommuter.

12. Are telecommuters required to keep in touch with their office?

Yes. Telecommuters should arrange, in advance, with their supervisors "core" hours of availability and how often they must call/report to the office. Although telecommuters by definition work at a location other than a conventional office, they are still County employees and expected to act in a professional manner at all times.

13. How will the County evaluate the effectiveness of the CTP?

The CAO will review the CTP program on a semi-annual basis using data provided by County departments. A report will be made to the Board of Supervisors, including the number of telecommuters Countywide, days/hours spent telecommuting, the impact on employee absenteeism and average vehicle ridership.

For further information about the CTP, please contact the CAO Office of Workplace Programs at (213) 974-2619.

VPL:CH

4/2005 - revised